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Virgil's *Georgics* and the Dating of Propertius' First Book

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ABSTRACT

This article re-examines a passage in the first book of Propertius which has generally been interpreted as establishing that the collection was published after Actium. In fact, these lines do not necessarily allude to Antony's defeat, but fit even better with the situation in the years leading up to the battle. Once that has been established, the balance of evidence supports a considerably earlier date for Propertius' first book. This prompts a re-evaluation of the direction of influence between it and Virgil's Georgics. Contrary to traditional assumptions, Virgil can be seen to have reacted strongly to the elegist's brilliant debut.

All discussions of the dating of Propertius' first book begin from the same mistaken premise.¹ The only datable reference in the book comes in the sixth elegy, which envisions the impending departure of a friend called Tullus for a post in the province of Asia. This mission will set right the depredations of a previous provincial administration (1.6.19–20):

tu patrum meritis conare anteire secures,
et uetera oblitis iura refer sociis.

Let you yourself attempt to surpass the well-deserved axes of your paternal uncle, and restore to our allies the ancient rights they have forgotten.

The general chronological context requires that the previous venal administration in the East must be that of Antony. Therefore the poem and the book to which it belongs are both universally dated after his defeat at Actium. But this inference is wrong. Common sense suggests that the watershed of Actium divides Book 1 from Book 2. Propertius' second book opens with a poem that reviews the wars of Octavian and Antony from Mutina to Actium as a completed, self-contained series of events leading up to Octavian's triumph of 27 B.C. (2.1.25–34). In stark contrast, the first book takes its political bearings from the Perusine War, which provides the context for its final two poems. The only glimmer of light, politically speaking, is Tullus' mission to the East, which has not yet started. The imperative quoted above implies that the vindication of the rights of Rome's allies is a job yet incomplete. If Elegy 1.6 was written after the Battle of Actium, why is its criticism of Antony's maladministration of Asia so subtle and oblique? Where is the triumphalism? Basic propriety would seem to demand that Propertius mention the epochal event that made the mission of Tullus possible. Notwithstanding the dangers of an *argumentum ex silentio*, if these lines were written after Actium, the omission of any allusion to that all-changing event, which would have made the liberation of Rome's allies possible, beggars belief.

¹ For their comments on an earlier draft of this piece, I owe thanks to Ted Kaizer, Zara Chadha and the Journal's readers.

I will show that Propertius' first book predates Actium by demonstrating how the internal evidence of *Elegy* 1.6 fits much better in the context of the years before Actium in which tensions between Octavian and Antony were building, and specifically the events of 33 B.C. This earlier date has important consequences for the relationship between Propertius and others, especially Virgil, whose *Georgics* was published just after Actium. Scholars have identified several passages where there is an arguable intertextual relationship between the first book of Propertius' elegies and the *Georgics* of Virgil; but these discussions are inevitably framed in terms of Propertius alluding to the *Georgics*.² In the second part of this article, I will turn these arguments on their head and show that these passages make much better sense as allusions by Virgil to Propertius. I conclude by discussing another passage from the *Georgics* in which I argue that Virgil is referring quite explicitly to Propertius' achievement in his first book.

1 THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PROPERTIUS 1.6

Ever since Jones published epigraphic evidence that L. Volcarius Tullus (cos. 33 B.C.) was indeed proconsul and governor of Asia, it has been agreed that this man must have been Tullus' uncle and that the *securis* (19) and *imperium* (34) Propertius refers to in this poem point clearly to his governorship.³ Unfortunately, we do not have a date for his term as governor. The inscription in which he is mentioned comes from around 9 B.C., and refers back to a precedent established earlier by Volcarius as proconsul, that of voting a crown to the person who had come up with the best way of honouring the emperor. It is generally and rightly assumed that a provincial governor, especially of an eastern province, could not have sponsored such an extravagant honour for Octavian before Actium. Thus, Volcarius is usually assumed to have been one of the first governors of Asia after Actium, perhaps the first, in 30/29 B.C.⁴

The problem comes when we relate this tentative date to Propertius' poem. Treatments of the dating of Book 1 persistently make the mistake of treating the reference to Volcarius' governorship as though it establishes a *terminus post quem* for the publication of Propertius 1.⁵ To give a typical example, Lyne says:⁶

² See especially W. W. Batstone, 'Amor improbus, felix qui, and tardus Apollo: the Monobiblos and the *Georgics*', *Classical Philology* 87 (1992), 287–302.

³ Thus R. Syme, 'Missing persons III', *Historia* 11 (1962), 146–55, at 152 = *Roman Papers*, E. Badian (ed.) (1979), vol. 2, 530–40, at 536–7. For the epigraphic supplement that confirmed the proconsulship of Volcarius, see A. H. M. Jones, 'L. Volcarius Tullus, proconsul of Asia', *Classical Review* 5 (1955), 244–5; see also V. Ehrenberg and A. H. M. Jones, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius* (1976), no. 98 (the second edition has the supplemented inscription). On the references in Propertius 1.6 to the governorship of Tullus, see R. O. A. M. Lyne, 'Propertius and Tibullus: early exchanges', *Classical Quarterly* 48 (1998), 519–44, at 520–1.

⁴ For a date of 30/29 B.C., see F. Cairns, *Sextus Propertius: the Augustan Elegist* (2006), 159 and M. Hubbard, *Propertius* (1974), 43; on the controversy over the date, see I. M. L. M. DuQuesnay, 'In memoriam Galli: Propertius 1.21', in A. Woodman and J. Powell (eds), *Author and Audience in Latin Literature* (1992), 52–83, at n. 109. The other known dates in his career are that he was praetor in 46 B.C. (Cic., *Ad fam.* 13.14.1) and went on to govern Cilicia the following year (Cic., *Ad Att.* 14.9.3); see R. Syme, 'Observations on the province of Cilicia', in W. M. Calder and J. Keil (eds), *Anatolian Studies Presented to William Hepburn Buckler* (1939), 299–332, at 321 = *Roman Papers*, E. Badian (ed.) (1979), vol. 1, 120–48, at 138. His activity between 44 and 33 B.C. is entirely unknown. The supposition of G. W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (1965), 21, that he served Antony in the East is unsupported. Similarly speculative is the argument of DuQuesnay, op. cit. (n. 4), 78 and Cairns, op. cit. (n. 4), 47–9 that Prop. 1.21 and 22 imply that he fought on the side of L. Antonius at Perusia.

⁵ Thus, for example, Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 4), 43 and Batstone, op. cit. (n. 2), 301–2. More recently, see A. Luther, 'Ein *terminus ante quem* für die *Monobiblos* des Propertius', *Latomus* 62 (2003), 801–6, at 801–2, whose suggestion of 29 B.C. as a new *terminus ante quem* for Book 1 is of course compatible with the even earlier date argued for here.

⁶ Lyne, op. cit. (n. 3), 521.

We may infer a proconsulship in 30/29 BC — as many of course have done (e.g. Enk on 1.6.19). But it is as well to set out the evidence clearly. The book cannot have been published earlier than 30 BC.

But all this is quite backwards. Poem 1.6 does not refer to the proconsulship as a *fait accompli* belonging to the past; more likely, it has yet to begin. Tullus is still in Rome with Propertius, and his trip to Asia is referred to repeatedly in the future tense (1.6.3 1–6):

at tu seu mollis qua tendit Ionia, seu qua
 Lydia Pactoli tingit arata liquor,
 seu pedibus terras seu pontum remige carpes,
 ibis et accepti pars eris imperii.
 tum tibi si qua mei ueniet non immemor hora,
 uiuere me duro sidere certus eris.

But you, whether you go where gentle Ionia extends or where the waters of the Pactolus irrigate the fields of Lydia, whether you make your way by foot overland or by oar across the sea, you will go and you will form a part of a welcome administration. If, then, some moment comes when you are not unmindful of me, you will know that I live under a cruel star.

The fact that the nephew will be *pars* of the *imperium* of someone else strongly implies that Tullus will travel to Asia as a part of his uncle's entourage.⁷ So the dramatic date of the poem is better seen as coming *before* the beginning of the proconsulship of Volcaci, which thus provides a *terminus ante quem*, not a *terminus post quem* for the setting of the poem. We will return to the relation of the dramatic date of the poem to the date of publication of the book in a moment, but first we must explore the question of how far in advance Volcaci's proconsulship would have been announced.

The assumption that implicitly underlies the arguments that Book 1 of Propertius was published after 30 B.C. is that Volcaci's governorship must have been an appointment designated after Actium.⁸ At first sight, the logic of this position seems to be sound: before Actium, Asia was part of Antony's half of the empire, so Octavian was hardly in a position to appoint his own loyalist there until his rival had been eliminated. We will see in a moment that this assumption is in fact not necessary at all, but first we should note that it is not very compatible with the chronology implied by Propertius 1.6. In that elegy, Propertius and Tullus are in Rome, thinking about the departure of the latter for the East. But it is clear that the soldier-nephew of Volcaci must have been present at the Battle of Actium. The campaign called for all hands on deck: *tota Italia*.⁹ To counterbalance the fact that the consuls of 32 B.C. were in fact allies of Antony, Octavian presented to the world a preponderance of senior ex-magistrates. As a consular ally and high-ranking lieutenant of Octavian, Volcaci must have been by Octavian's side in 32/31 B.C. Propertius tells us

⁷ The phrase perhaps also implies that Tullus will share at a further remove, via his uncle, the triumviral *imperium* of Octavian, but that is too obscure a connection to be the primary meaning here. Many commentators have imagined that 'anteire secures' implies that the nephew has obtained an independent command in which he will aspire to outdo his uncle, but that is an unnecessary supposition. For example, H. E. Butler and E. A. Barber, *The Elegies of Propertius: Edited with an Introduction and Commentary* (1933), ad 1.6 say: 'It is not probable that Tullus was in his uncle's retinue; for to ask an aide-de-camp to outdo his chief (*anteire secures*) is grotesque'. But many others, such as D. R. Shackleton-Bailey, *Propertiana* (1955), 20, F. Cairns, 'Some problems in Propertius 1.6', *American Journal of Philology* 95 (1974), 150–63, at 160–1, and P. Fedeli, *Sesto Propertio: Il primo libro delle Elegie* (1980), 178–9, have rightly seen that it is neither 'impudent' nor 'insolent' (thus L. Richardson, *Propertius Elegies I–IV* (1977), ad loc.) for Propertius to encourage Tullus to attempt to outdo his uncle despite being his subordinate; such an invitation is a polite compliment both to the achievements of the uncle and to the emulous zeal of the nephew. Cairns, op. cit., 161–3 further suggests that the nephew might have accompanied his uncle as a *propraetor* and that *anteire* puns on the etymology of *praetor* from *praetere*.

⁸ Thus H.-P. Stahl, *Propertius, "Love" and "War": Individual and State under Augustus* (1985), 83.

⁹ Aug., *Res Gestae* 25.2, on which see R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (1939), 276–93 and P. Herrmann, *Der römische Kaisereid* (1968), 78–89.

that Tullus was actively following a military career under the patronage of his uncle, so it is hard to imagine that he was absent from Actium. In September of 31 B.C., Octavian did not return to Rome after the battle, but pressed on eastward into Greece and then on to Asia, where Suetonius attests that he entered into his fourth consulship on 1 January 30 B.C.¹⁰ He based himself at Samos for the winter in order to settle affairs in the East, but in mid-winter he was compelled to make a quick trip back to Brundisium to quell a mutiny brewing among his veterans in Italy.¹¹ Octavian stayed in Brundisium for only a month before heading back to Asia, *en route* to Egypt via Syria.¹² The fact that Volcacious ended up as proconsul of Asia soon after Actium surely implies that he followed the new princes eastward immediately after Actium. It is most unlikely that he joined him on the extremely hazardous winter trip back to Brundisium; that would have been quite unnecessary, and in any case not even Octavian returned all the way back to Rome. It is much more likely that Volcacious stayed in Asia to reorganize the government of his new province. Or perhaps his term of office did not begin until Octavian marched south toward Alexandria.

We now turn to the central problem of determining how Volcacious' governorship could have been announced to the Roman public before Actium. The first problem is that Propertius implies that Volcacious' proconsulship was not an *ad hoc* appointment as many appointments in this period seem to have been.¹³ Instead, it was ordained and announced at some interval in advance, which was normal Republican procedure. How far in advance it might have been announced is at first unclear, since the usual procedures had been rendered moot by the triumvirate. The basic law regulating the assignment of consular provinces was the Lex Sempronia of 123 B.C., which stipulated that the two consular provinces should be announced before the election of the consuls for that year and that these two provinces should be divided between the two consuls as soon as possible after they took office, either by mutual agreement or by lot.¹⁴ The consul would then typically set out for his province in the year after the expiry of his term of office. This picture was complicated by the Lex Pompeia of 52 B.C. This new law introduced a minimum of five years between holding the office of consul and acting as a provincial governor, but it is unclear if its terms were adhered to for very long in practice.¹⁵ Augustus eventually found it necessary to re-implement this provision of a five-year gap as part of his first constitutional settlement.¹⁶ Thus, most scholars agree that the provisions of the Lex Pompeia were not in force in the period that concerns us.¹⁷

In practice, none of this constitutional theory mattered much for Volcacious, since he was consul amid the rampant irregularities of the second triumvirate. Our sources for this period are poor, but it is clear enough that the triumvirs appointed the magistrates jointly and provincial governors separately.¹⁸ Dio and Appian both attest that the triumvirs made

¹⁰ Suet., *Aug.* 26.3; Dio 51.4.1; cf. D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (1966), 440 and 1289, n. 36. On Octavian's activities in this period, see F. Millar, 'The first revolution: Emperor Caesar, 36–28 BC', in *La révolution romaine après Ronald Syme: bilans et perspectives* (2000), 1–38, at 19–30.

¹¹ Suet., *Aug.* 17.3 with J. M. Carter, *Suetonius, Divus Augustus* (1982), ad loc.

¹² Dio 51.5.1–2.

¹³ For example, when Antony departed from Ephesus with Cleopatra in 41 B.C., he left governors behind for Asia and Syria: see Dio 48.24.3, with Magie, *op. cit.* (n. 10), 1280, n. 9.

¹⁴ A. W. Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic* (1999), 101–2.

¹⁵ See J. Leach, *Pompey the Great* (1986), 159–60; for more detail, see A. J. Marshall, 'The Lex Pompeia de provinciis (52 B.C.) and Cicero's Imperium in 51–50 B.C.: constitutional aspects', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 1.1 (1972), 887–921, at 891–3.

¹⁶ Dio 53.14.2.

¹⁷ For bibliography, see Lyne, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 521, n. 8. K. M. T. Atkinson, 'The governors of the province Asia in the reign of Augustus', *Historia* 7 (1958), 300–30, at 312–14 tried to show that the Lex Pompeia would have applied to Volcacious, but her arguments have been thoroughly refuted by Cairns, *op. cit.* (n. 7), 157–9 and by Hubbard, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 42–3.

¹⁸ See Appian, *BC* 4.2 and F. Millar, 'Triumvirate and Principate', *Journal of Roman Studies* 63 (1973), 50–67, at 51–3 = *Rome, the Greek World, and the East: Vol. 1, The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*, H.

a bargain many years in advance over the apportioning of consulships.¹⁹ The ranks of ex-consuls and ex-praetors who were qualified to become provincial governors will have been thinned by the proscriptions, so their number was regularly supplemented in this period by appointing suffecti. In contrast to the mutually-agreed consulships, governorships were in the gift of each triumvir separately, and the evidence indicates that these appointments were made on an *ad hoc* basis without reference to the Senate or anyone else.²⁰ It is therefore exceedingly unlikely that the Senate carried on with the practice of designating consular provinces in this period, since it was not even pretending to make the appointments. Both the Lex Sempronia and the Lex Pompeia will therefore have fallen into abeyance.

We can now turn to the crucial problem: how could a partisan of Octavian have been designated in advance of Actium as a provincial governor in Antony's sphere of influence? In theory, the legal power of the triumvirs to make these provincial appointments was due to the *imperium* they wielded under the Lex Titia, but this was coming to an end. The precise date on which the triumviral powers lapsed is a notoriously vexed problem, but the majority view is that it was at the end of the year 33 B.C.²¹ At Tarentum in 37 B.C. the triumvirate had been renewed belatedly for another five years. As per the agreement between Octavian and Antony to alternate the consulship between partisans of the two men, Antony held his second consulship in 34 B.C. along with Scribonius Libo, who had recently gone over to him from his son-in-law, Sextus Pompey.²² The following year Octavian responded by holding his own second consulship, and he chose Volcacijs as his colleague. Next was Antony's turn and accordingly the consuls-designate for 32 B.C. were his lieutenants, Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus and C. Sosius. Propertius' implication that Volcacijs was a partisan of Octavian is confirmed by his place alongside Octavian, alternating with Antony and his men in the previous and subsequent years.²³ If scholars are right in thinking that the triumvirate expired on the last day of 33 B.C., then the future, apart from the already-designated consuls, was a blank sheet. The original plan for parcelling out the consulships foresaw that Octavian and Antony would share the office in 31 B.C., each for the third time.²⁴ But if this plan was to be enacted, the triumvirs would have to renew their power or jointly ignore its expiry as they had done in 37 B.C. Would the triumvirate be continued either implicitly or explicitly?

On 1 January 33 B.C., Octavian gave his answer. He returned to Rome from fighting in Illyricum in order to perform for the first time the solemn new-year rites for entering

M. Cotton and G. M. Rogers (eds) (2002), 241–70, at 243–7.

¹⁹ Dio 50.10.1 speaks of an eight-year plan that was supposed to conclude in 31 B.C. with a joint consulship of Octavian and Antony. Appian describes a modification to this agreement as part of the pact of Misenum (BC 5.73), on which see E. Gabba, *Appiani Bellorum civilium liber quintus* (1970), lxxi–lxxii. See also Dio 48.35.1–2 with U. Laffi, 'Poteri triumvirale e organi repubblicani', in A. Gara and D. Foraboschi (eds), *Il triumvirato costituente alla fine della repubblica romana* (1993), 37–65, at 54.

²⁰ See Millar, op. cit. (n. 18), 62 (= 261), with the examples cited in nn. 78 and 79, and see also above, n. 13.

²¹ On the 'notorious' problem, see Millar, op. cit. (n. 18), 62 (= 260). On the 'overwhelming scholarly consensus' in favour of 33 B.C., see D. Wardle, 'ILS 77: Nothing to do with the end of the second triumvirate', *Historia* 44 (1995), 496–97, at 496 and Millar, op. cit. (n. 10), 3. For a useful overview of various positions on the issue, see H. W. Benario, 'Octavian's status in 32 B.C.', *Chiron* 5 (1975), 301–9, at 302–4. For a concise and clear statement of the case in favour of 33 B.C., see P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: the Achievements of the Divine Augustus* (1967), ad RG 7.1; even more concisely, see Syme, op. cit. (n. 9), 277–8, n. 6. For a different point of view, see Gabba, op. cit. (n. 19), lxxviii–lxxix. For further details, see J. Bleicken, *Zwischen Republik und Prinzipat: zum Charakter des Zweiten Triumvirats* (1990), 14–16 and K. M. Girardet, 'Per continuos annos decem (res gestae divi Augusti 7.1): zur Frage nach dem Endtermin des Triumvirats', *Chiron* 25 (1995), 147–61.

²² Appian, BC 5.139.

²³ On the clearly Octavianic allegiance of Volcacijs, see DuQuesnay, op. cit. (n. 4), 79 and 83 and Cairns, op. cit. (n. 4), 44–9.

²⁴ See above, n. 19.

into the office of consul.²⁵ Octavian will have taken the auspices, sacrificed on the Capitol, and given the traditional speech to the Senate on religious matters and on the state of the Republic.²⁶ Having given his speech and having made his point, Octavian laid down the office of consul the very next day in favour of a suffect and returned to Illyricum.²⁷ According to the chronology worked out by Kromeyer and endorsed by Syme, this one-day consulship must have been the occasion on which Octavian attacked Antony in public for his administration of the East for the first time.²⁸ The centrepiece of this abuse must have been a condemnation of the so-called donations of Alexandria, news of which will recently have reached Octavian.²⁹ In late 34 B.C., Antony had created Cleopatra's children monarchs of various areas in the East; not, to be sure, the province of Asia, but the theme of Octavian's speech was surely a wide-ranging denunciation of his fellow triumvir's administration of the eastern half of the empire. The speech to the Senate by the other consul, Volcarius, must have harmonized thematically. Since Octavian left both Rome and his magistracy immediately, he will not have addressed the People in the *contio* which was traditionally held by the new consuls several days afterwards.³⁰ The duty of articulating to the People the message about Antony that Octavian had delivered to the Senate was therefore left to Volcarius and the suffect, L. Autronius Paetus. No doubt both meetings, of the Senate and of the People, were lively occasions, with many of Antony's partisans being present. In this light, the allusions to the mismanagement of Asia in Propertius 1.6 are revealed as clear echoes of what must have been the rhetoric of Octavian and Volcarius in January 33 B.C. Later in 33, Antony wrote public and private responses to Octavian's charges in which he defended his *acta*, and early in 32 B.C., probably again on the first day of the year, the new consul C. Sosius retaliated in like manner with an attack on Octavian in the Senate.³¹

Under the Republic, one of the first items of business for a new consul was to organize the division of provincial governorships for the following year; this seems to have been a routine part of the first Senate meeting of the year.³² It is entirely plausible, therefore, that in his inaugural speech of 33 B.C., Octavian proposed, in the light of the impending expiration of the triumvirate at the end of the year, that the Senate should designate his consular colleague as the governor of Asia for the following year. The point will have been to underline the expiry of the legal framework of the triumvirate at the end of 33 B.C. At the end of the year, Antony and Octavian both became, legally, ordinary citizens without the supra-consular power that entitled them to bypass the Senate and appoint provincial governors of their choosing. By re-asserting senatorial control over the provinces as of

²⁵ Appian, *Ill.* 27.

²⁶ cf. Ov., *ex Pont.* 4.4.35–9 and Livy, *passim*, e.g. 37.1.1; and see H. H. Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic* (1981), 52–4.

²⁷ Appian, *Ill.* 28.

²⁸ The evidence for the speeches against Antony comes from Dio (50.1–2) and Plutarch (*Ant.* 55–6), but they do not specify a date. J. Kromayer, 'Kleine Forschungen zur Geschichte des zweiten Triumvirats', *Hermes* 33 (1898), 1–70, at 35–41 works out the chronology. See also Syme, *op. cit.* (n. 9), 276 and W. Eck, *The Age of Augustus* (2nd edn, 2007), 34.

²⁹ Thus Carter, *op. cit.* (n. 11), ad 69.2.

³⁰ On the *contio*, see T. Mommsen, *Le Droit publique romain* (1887), vol. 2, 288–9 and Scullard, *op. cit.* (n. 26), 54.

³¹ Suetonius records Antony's private response in an incredulous letter to Octavian of the year 33 B.C. (*Aug.* 69.2); on the date of the letter, see Kromayer, *op. cit.* (n. 28), 36 and Carter's note, *op. cit.* (n. 11), ad loc. On 1 January as the date of Sosius' counter-attack, see Dio 49.41.4 and 50.2.3 with J. Osgood, *Caesar's Legacy: Civil War and the Emergence of the Roman Empire* (2006), 352, n. 8; for 1 February, see C. Pelling, 'The Triumviral Period', in *The Cambridge Ancient History* (2nd edn), vol. 10 (1996), 1–69, at 49 with n. 259.

³² J. P. V. D. Balsdon, 'Roman history, 65–50 B.C.: five problems', *Journal of Roman Studies* 52 (1962), 134–41, at 139, with n. 40 says: 'Cicero's statement [Cic., *De prov. cons.* 36], *consul Kalendis Ianuariis habere provinciam debet* may well indicate that 1st January was the day on which the *sortitio* normally took place'. Livy (26.26.5) strongly implies that the allocation of the following year's provinces would have been an expected part of the agenda when the consuls addressed the Senate on their first day in office.

1 January 32 B.C., the point when the powers that had been renewed in the treaty of Tarentum expired, Octavian would have been removing the fig-leaf of legal authority from both himself and Antony. Octavian and Volcacijs will have claimed in their speeches that the latter would go out and put right the mismanagement of Antony and his cronies, just as Propertius says.

Octavian need not have seriously imagined that Antony would suffer Volcacijs to enter and take over Asia as governor; that was not the point. Merely the designation of the province as Volcacijs' was enough to underline the imminent expiration of Antony's constitutional authority. This is similar to the manoeuvre that Caesar's enemies attempted against him when they proposed that his provinces of Gaul be assigned to the consuls of 55 B.C., the tactic against which Cicero successfully protested in his speech *De provinciis consularibus*. If we believe Propertius, however, Volcacijs really did intend to go to Asia in order to force the issue. His arrival would have put Antony in an extremely difficult position, especially if, as has been argued, the only legal authority wielded by the triumvirs after the expiration of the triumvirate was the military and provincial *imperium* they continued to hold by virtue of the fact that they had not yet been relieved by a successor duly appointed by the Senate.³³ As it turned out, Volcacijs had no need to go to Asia in 32 B.C. as a provocation, for Antony provided Octavian with ample *casus belli* that year by his refusal to disassociate himself from Cleopatra and by the alleged contents of his will.³⁴ Antony responded to Octavian's flaunting of the expiration of their triumviral authority at the end of 33 B.C. by ignoring it. As is well known, he continued to strike coinage calling himself a triumvir right up to Actium.³⁵ Octavian pointedly dropped the title; his legal authority at Rome was likewise expired, but instead he could control the Senate by force. If we assume that the consul Sosius' proposal to the Senate, which was probably delivered on the first day of 32 B.C., was to strip Octavian of his military *imperium*, perhaps by appointing a new governor for Illyricum, this was a mirror-image of Octavian's pre-emptive efforts to undermine Antony's post-triumviral legal authority one year previously.³⁶ The difference is that Sosius no longer had the advantage of surprise that Octavian and Volcacijs had a year before; hence his proposal was vetoed by a well-prepared tribune.³⁷ Later in 32 B.C., the pro-Antonian consuls had to flee Rome and the Senate declared war. In 31 B.C., Octavian left Italy under arms, and inevitably Volcacijs and his nephew joined him. In the aftermath of Octavian's victory Volcacijs will finally have entered his designated province as governor.

We have seen that the low-key anti-Antonian rhetoric of Propertius 1.6 is perfectly compatible with the official rhetoric at Rome at the beginning of 33 B.C. and is unlikely to belong to the period of triumphalist crowing after Actium. The poem cannot have been written before 1 January 33 B.C., which is the date of the first public criticism of Antony's administration by Octavian; and, as we have seen, it is unlikely to have been written after Actium. Indeed, it surely was not written even as late as 32/31 B.C. when civil war was in clear prospect, or Tullus would have been addressed not as a man planning to go off to help govern a province, but as a man going off to fight a war. We can thus narrow down

³³ Thus Benario, op. cit. (n. 21), 304–6, K. M. Girardet, 'Der Rechtsstatus Oktavians im Jahre 32 v. Chr.', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 133 (1990), 322–50, at 338–9 and N. G. Lewis, 'Rechtsfrage II: Octavian's powers in 32 B.C.', *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 16 (1991), 57–62; see also Osgood, op. cit. (n. 31), 352, n. 5. According to this argument, Octavian did not set foot inside the *pomerium* during the year 32 B.C. in order to avoid cancelling his *imperium*.

³⁴ Syme, op. cit. (n. 9), 279–83.

³⁵ M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (1974), nos 544–5.

³⁶ On the probable content of Sosius' speech, see R. A. Kearsley, 'Octavian in the year 32 BC: the S.C. *de Aphrodisiensibus* and the *genera militiae*', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 142 (1999), 52–67, at 55 and F. De Martino, 'Sugli aspetti giuridici del triumvirato', in A. Gara and D. Foraboschi (eds), *Il triumvirato costituente alla fine della repubblica romana* (1993), 67–83, at 81; on the date, see above, n. 31.

³⁷ Dio 50.2.3.

the writing of the poem to the period from the beginning of 33 to the middle of 32 B.C., most probably in the early months of 33, soon after the consular speeches of early January. But what of the date of publication? We might imagine that a poem like this with a specific dramatic date could nevertheless have been published as part of a collection some years later. But there is no evidence for any poems composed later than this one in Book 1, and the first poem to mention Actium is at the start of the next book. Furthermore, there are considerations regarding the relationship of Propertius and Tullus that make it unlikely that this poem was published much later than its date of composition. Cairns has emphasized that Tullus, as the addressee of the first poem and the last poem of the first book as well as two others in between, occupies an important position as the patron of the book as a whole.³⁸ If the book was published after 31 B.C., when Tullus will surely have left Italy on military service with Octavian, it is strange that Propertius never mentions in any of the poems addressed to him in Book 1 that his patron is abroad. In fact, that is precisely what he does in a later elegy from his third book. In 3.22 he implores Tullus, who is *still* in Asia many years later ('tam multos ... annos', 3.22.1), to come back to Rome. Propertius would have seemed out of touch to dedicate his first work to a man who was away from Rome without mentioning that fact, especially since, as it turned out, he would not return to Rome for many years. So it is reasonable to conclude that Book 1 was published not long after the dramatic date of poem 1.6, before Tullus' departure from Italy and before the events of Actium had made the tone of the book incongruous with the tenor of the times. Virgil's *Georgics* provides a counter-example of a work that was substantially written before Actium, but which was revised to take it into account. Propertius' first book shows no signs of such revision.

To conclude, there is no evidence that Propertius wrote any of the poems in his first book after Actium, and Elegy 1.6 is far too low-key in its references to Antony's administration for that to be true. Rather, its tenor fits perfectly with the beginning of Octavian's public criticism of Antony's arrangements in the East which coincided with the beginning of Volcarius' consulship in 33 B.C. The designation of Asia as his future province would have been perfectly consistent with Octavian's deliberate provocation of Antony at this time. At that point it will not have been clear what circumstances might make the governorship a reality. It was not obvious that there would have to be a climactic struggle nor that Octavian would necessarily emerge with such an absolute victory. Thus Propertius reflects the official rhetoric of his day, but he hedged his bet with a certain degree of reserve. The praise of Volcarius and his nephew is loud and clear, but the criticism of Antony is left implicit and oblique.

II PROPERTIUS IN THE *GEORGICS*

Now that we have shown that Propertius could have written and published his first book in the context of the build-up to Actium, it becomes much less plausible to assume that he was in a position to allude to Virgil's *Georgics*, some passages of which clearly belong to a post-Actium milieu. That is not impossible, of course, given the long gestation of the *Georgics* and the possibility that Virgil may have recited parts of it outside Maecenas' circle. But the likelihood now should be that, where there are intertextual links between the two texts, Virgil was alluding to Propertius rather than vice versa. Virgil was the senior poet, but that is no reason to exclude the possibility that he was responding to the work of a younger contemporary. Given that the historical evidence is so fraught with difficulty, why has there been such a reluctance to see Virgil as alluding to the early work of his younger contemporary?

³⁸ Cairns, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 35–69.

One possible reason for the presumption of Propertius' belatedness is that, as we will see, in the intertexts in question his subject matter is, as usual, not entirely serious, whereas the Virgilian passages are ones of deep philosophical import. The natural assumption might be that Propertius' frivolous lines are a parody of the serious sentiments of Virgil. But in the case of Virgil, such an assumption that the serious intertext must be prior to the frivolous one is demonstrably unsound. Let us consider the famous case of Aeneas' quotation from Catullus' *Lock of Berenice* when he meets Dido in the Underworld.³⁹ At a painful juncture of deadly seriousness, as Aeneas struggles to explain his actions to Dido, he spouts a line torn from a highly arch piece of courtly flattery. It has rightly been said that, if we did not know better, we might well assume that Catullus' line, or even Callimachus', was 'a parody of questionable taste' of Virgil's sombre scene.⁴⁰ Such is our natural presumption that the frivolous is secondary to the serious. We will see that Virgil uses this same technique of repurposing another poet's lighthearted sentiment in a serious context with respect to Propertius.

The first of our intertexts is a crucial and hotly contested passage in the first book of the *Georgics* (1.145f.):

tum uariae uenere artes. labor omnia uicit
improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas.

Then came the various crafts. Wicked toil and pressing need when times were hard overcame everything.

Batstone argued that the belated enjambment of *improbus* lends it a certain similarity to the beginning of the first elegy of Propertius (1.1.4–6):⁴¹

et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus
donec me docuit castas odisse puellas
improbus et nullo vivere consilio.

... naughty Love put his feet on my head and pressed down until he taught me to despise proper girls and to lead a feckless life.

Batstone notes, correctly, that the appearance of *improbus* in Virgil's lines is paradoxical and unexpected. The ocean of critical ink that has been spilt over the interpretation of this passage is testament to that.⁴² He also argues, wrongly, that the adjective is equally unexpected in Propertius, and that it therefore constitutes a polemical reference to the *Georgics*. But *improbus* is in fact, as Shackleton Bailey called it, a 'stock epithet' for *Amor*.⁴³ When Propertius calls *Amor* 'naughty' he is straightforwardly invoking a familiar trope of love poetry, a tradition in which Virgil's *Eclogues* also featured ('improbus ille puer', 8.50). If we are to imagine this as a reference to the *Georgics*, then we have to accept that Propertius has taken a striking and utterly paradoxical use of the epithet from Virgil and has reduced it to banality by injecting it back into the routine usage from whence it had come.

³⁹ Cat. 66.39: 'invita, o regina, tuo de vertice cessi'; and Virg., *Aen.* 6.460: 'invitus, regina, tuo de litore cessi'. On the critical nausea induced by Virgil's allusion, see G. B. Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets* (1986), 88–90 and A. Barchiesi, 'Some points on a map of shipwrecks', in idem, *Speaking Volumes: Narrative and Intertext in Ovid and Other Latin Poets* (2001), 141–54, at 143–6.

⁴⁰ L. Fulkerson, *The Ovidian Heroine as Author: Reading, Writing, and Community in the Heroides* (2005), 21.

⁴¹ Batstone, op. cit. (n. 2), 289–95.

⁴² For an overview, see R. Jenkyns, 'Labor Improbus', *Classical Quarterly* 43 (1993), 243–8.

⁴³ Shackleton-Bailey, op. cit. (n. 7), 1 says: 'a stock epithet: Virg. *Ecl.* 8.49, *Aen.* 4.412, *Ov. Fast.* 2.331, *Stat. Silv.* 1.2.75' to which Batstone, op. cit. (n. 2), 295, n. 33 replies 'requires the qualification, "after Vergil and Propertius"'. But that qualification is empty for it is the uncomplicated and routine appearance of the epithet in the *Eclogues* which attests to the tradition in which Propertius was also working. Furthermore, Propertius' 'amor docuit' is taken straight from this passage of the *Eclogues* (8.47).

Why allude to love poetry in the context of describing how *labor* came into the world? Virgil makes the connection with elegy explicit for us. His phrase 'labor omnia uicit — improbus' is a startling reworking of the climactic line of the speech Virgil himself put in the mouth of Gallus in the final *Eclogue* (10.69): 'omnia uincit Amor: et nos cedamus Amori.' Virgil thus announces near the beginning of the *Georgics* that he has turned his back on the theme of his previous work by revising its climactic motto. The poet of the *Eclogues*, who used to be preoccupied, like the elegists, with the workings of *Amor*, has turned his attention to the world of *labor*. From the loftier standpoint of the Hesiodic poet of the *Georgics*, pastoral and elegy have more in common than they are different.⁴⁴ This line, with its paradoxical use of the epithet *improbus*, manages to allude to Virgil's own love poetry in *Eclogue* 8, to his portrait of Gallus as a lover in *Eclogue* 10, and to Propertius as Gallus' heir as Rome's leading love poet. In this way, Virgil turns the page on his past not only by superseding his own earlier preoccupations, but by superseding the work of those, like Propertius, who have carried onward along the path Virgil has abandoned. We will see that this manner of casting the younger poet Propertius as the current representative of a mode of poetry that Virgil himself has outgrown is typical of the *Georgics*.

The next intertext concerns another famous programmatic passage in the *Georgics* (2.490–2):

felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas
atque metus omnis et inexorabile fatum
subiecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis auari:

Happy is he who has been able to understand the causes of things and to cast underfoot all fear and relentless fate and the din of insatiable Acheron.

This may have a more than coincidental relationship with a passage in which Propertius laments that the departure of Cynthia from Rome has left him miserable and unable to work (1.12.15–16):

felix qui potuit praesenti flere puellae:
non nihil aspersus gaudet Amor lacrimis;

Happy is he who has been able to cry to his girlfriend while she is present; Love takes no little delight in being sprinkled with tears.

Batstone makes a plausible case that this is more than an off-hand use of the commonplace expression *felix qui*, in that the two hexameters have the same structure: '*felix qui potuit* modifier-infinitive-noun'.⁴⁵ At first glance it might seem that Propertius is parodying Virgil's serious sentiment, and this is how both Mynors and Heyworth characterize the relationship in their respective commentaries, but we saw above that this is a dangerous assumption to make with respect to Virgilian intertextuality.⁴⁶

The pointed connection between the form of Virgil's *felix qui* expression and its content, the implied homage to and praise of Lucretius, lies in the fact that what the Epicurean aspires to is precisely *felicitas*.⁴⁷ Effectively, Virgil is punning on the combination of the

⁴⁴ On elegy as 'pastoral in city clothes', see P. Veyne, *Roman Erotic Elegy: Love, Poetry, and the West* (1988), 101–15.

⁴⁵ Batstone, op. cit. (n. 2), 295, n. 35; this connection is rejected, however, by Fedeli, op. cit. (n. 7), 296.

⁴⁶ R. A. B. Mynors, *Virgil, Georgics* (1990), ad 2.490 and S. J. Heyworth, *Cynthia: a Companion to the Text of Propertius* (2007), 59–60. The latter adduces Propertius' 'unconventional usage of *cognoscere* in 13' to support Virgil's priority, but Virgil may just as well have been alluding to that distinctive Propertian usage while turning his phrase on its head.

⁴⁷ On the implicit reference to Lucretius in these lines, see Mynors, op. cit. (n. 46), ad loc. and *contra* see R. F. Thomas, *Virgil, Georgics* (1988), ad loc.

common Latin expression *felix qui* and the sense of *felicitas* as a translation of ἀταραξία.⁴⁸ If Propertius is imitating Virgil, then he has eviscerated the phrase of its philosophical pun and limply restored the expression to the banal idiom it always was. If, on the other hand, Propertius wrote first, he was making paradoxical but not punning use of a common turn of phrase with no particular connection to Epicureanism. It was Virgil who added the pun, and by alluding to Propertius, he once again quoted the younger poet's words to underscore his own change of stripes from poet of love to poet of higher philosophical matters in the *Georgics*. In Propertius, the poet's only concern is to get Cynthia back again, for he is less miserable when she is around. Thus the paradox is that he will be 'happy' even though he is crying in her presence. Like an addict, Propertius can only think of getting his next fix as he cycles between the exquisite mixture of pain and pleasure that is being with Cynthia and the much greater misery of her being away. That senseless and false 'happiness' of the passionate lover, whose need can never be satisfied, is precisely the unending cycle of desire and false fulfilment that the Epicurean has escaped from. When Virgil nods at the paradoxical and ultimately empty *felicitas* of the elegiac lover as he pays his respects to Lucretius, he reminds us that the Epicurean sage has conquered not only the fear of death but also the disease of love. So too, Virgil has transcended the subject matter of love poetry and is striving as a didactic poet to rise to the heights of Lucretius, though he is not quite there yet ('fortunatus et ille', 2.493). From that vantage point, love appears not only to be a profitless sentimental attachment, as for Hesiod, but a mortal affliction. Once again, Propertius serves as a contemporary representative of a mode of poetry Virgil has abandoned in favour of higher, didactic subjects: not Hesiodic *labor* this time but Lucretian cosmology and ethics.

There is a further chapter to this particular intertextual nexus. The final poem of what is transmitted as the second book of Propertius includes a famous discussion of Virgil's career, including the *Aeneid*, which is reported as being well in progress. One peculiarity of this passage is that Propertius spends much more time discussing the *Eclogues* than either the *Georgics* or the *Aeneid*.⁴⁹ He begins by referring to the characters in the first two of Virgil's *Eclogues* (2.34.69–4):

utque decem possint corrumpere mala puellas,
missus et impressis haedus ab uberibus.
felix qui uiles pomis mercaris amores;
huic licet ingratae Tityrus ipse canat.
felix intactum Corydon qui temptat Alexin
agricolae domini carpere delicias.

... how girls can be led astray by the gift of ten apples and a kid taken from a milked udder. Happy are you who can purchase love on the cheap with fruit! Let Tityrus himself sing to her, though she is ungrateful. Happy is Corydon who attempts to pluck the virginal Alexis, delight of his rustic master.

If this passage appeared in any other context, it would not be a noteworthy intertext for us, because, though it uses the commonplace expression *felix qui* twice, it shifts in part to the second person and omits the word *possum* and the rest of the structure of the lines we have just discussed. Nevertheless, given that this is part of an explicit discussion of Virgil by Propertius, it seems safe to recognize it as part of their ongoing exchange. Propertius responds to Virgil by turning his characterization of the difference between their two

⁴⁸ For a similar Statian pun on the Epicurean connotations of the word *felix*, see R. G. M. Nisbet, 'Felicitas at Surrentum (Statius, *Silvae* 2.2)', *Journal of Roman Studies* 68 (1978), 1–11, at 1–2.

⁴⁹ See R. F. Thomas, 'Genre through intertextuality: Theocritus to Virgil and Propertius', in M. A. Harder, R. F. Regtuit and G. C. Wakker (eds), *Theocritus* (1996), 227–46, at 242: 'For Propertius, one of the *Eclogues*, Virgil's chief exploration of the amatory dilemma, will be worth as much as two books of the *Georgics* or the *Aeneid*.'

careers on its head. No longer are the *Eclogues* the discarded prelude to a higher, nobler calling; on Propertius' tendentious rewriting of Virgil's career, his most important accomplishment was his love poetry.⁵⁰ There was a long tradition of regarding both Tityrus and Corydon as semi-autobiographical characters, and the gift of ten apples seems to recall the number of the *Eclogues* themselves.⁵¹ Against the background of the composition of the *Aeneid*, Propertius recalls a time when Virgil's poetic world was simpler and perhaps better. Whatever the difference between the successful wooing of Tityrus and the hopeless longing of Corydon, both belong to a happy and innocent pastoral milieu far removed from the concerns of state that currently preoccupy Caesar's poet. By reasserting the connection Virgil once recognized between happiness and the pursuit of love, successful or not, Propertius' second *felix qui* rebuts Virgil's Epicureanizing reaction against elegiac love in the *Georgics*. On this rereading of Virgil's career, it does not chart a progression away from trivial themes to loftier concerns, but a sad drifting away from the love poetry that was his true gift.

The points of contact between Propertius 1 and the *Georgics* discussed above work better, I would argue, when the Propertian text has priority, but the point is certainly debatable. Given the long gestation of the *Georgics* and the importance of informal circulation of poetry before publication, it is not at all impossible that the influence was mutual. On the other hand, there is one more programmatic passage in the *Georgics* which alludes at one stroke to multiple aspects of Propertius' first book, in a way that seems to imply that Virgil knew it as a unit.⁵² In this passage the younger elegist serves once again to embody stubborn adherence to a kind of poetics which Virgil is in the process of abandoning.

At the beginning of the third book of the *Georgics*, Virgil famously explains his trajectory from rejecting poetry about 'kings and battles' ('reges et proelia', *Ecl.* 6.3) to preparing to write a poem about 'warfare and a hero' ('arma virumque', *Aen.* 1.1). The thrust of the argument is ingenious. He explains that the ordinary variety of Callimacheanism has become so common at Rome that in order to adhere to its spirit, it is necessary to invert the letter of its prescriptions (3.3–5):

cetera, quae uacuas tenuissent carmine mentes,
omnia iam uulgata: quis aut Eurysthea durum
aut inlaudati nescit Busiridis aras?

Everything else, which might have occupied empty minds with a poem, is common now: who does not know about harsh Eurystheus or the altar of Busiris, unfit for praise?

Virgil rejects as trite the labours of Heracles and the story of Busiris, which featured in the *Aetia*, quoting Callimachus' very words against his own subject matter.⁵³ The subsequent lines bring another set of examples that seem on the surface to provide an apparently somewhat random jumble of Hellenistic mythical motifs (3.6–8):

⁵⁰ P. Fedeli, *Properzio, Elegie Libro II* (2005), 994: 'Si capisce bene la ragione dell'ampio spazio riservato alle *Bucoliche* se si considera che ogni richiamo rinvia ad argomenti erotici: ciò significa che l'esaltazione della prima opera di Virgilio diviene per Properzio l'elogio di una poesia che presenta lo stesso stile "tenuè" della sua.'

⁵¹ For the Theocritean and Virgilian significance of the ten apples, see M. Fantuzzi, 'Amore pastorale e amore elegiaco, tra Grecia e Roma', in L. Belloni, L. De Finis and G. Moretti (eds), *L'officina ellenistica: Poesia dotta e popolare in Grecia e a Roma* (2003), 170–4. On the correspondence between Propertius' ten-line summary of the *Eclogues* and the poems themselves, see Thomas, op. cit. (n. 49), 242–4.

⁵² I leave to one side Batstone's final example of Propertian intertextuality, since it does not actually concern any specific passages in the *Georgics*. Whatever one makes of his claim that phrases such as *tardus amor* and *tardus Apollo* characterize Propertian elegy with a metapoetic sense of belatedness, there is no particular reason to connect that with the *Georgics* rather than, say, Gallan elegy. Batstone, op. cit. (n. 2), 297–301.

⁵³ Mynors, op. cit. (n. 46), ad 3.4 notes that Parthenius wrote a *Heracles*. On Busiris, see *Aetia* frs. 44–7 Pfeiffer. For *omnia iam uulgata*, see πάντα τὰ δημόσια (Callim., *Epig.* 28.4) with Thomas, op. cit. (n. 47), ad loc. For a different view of this passage, see S. J. Harrison, *Generic Enrichment in Vergil and Horace* (2007), 150–2.

cui non dictus Hylas puer et Latonia Delos
Hippodameque umeroque Pelops insignis eburno,
acer equis?

To/By whom has the boy Hylas not been narrated, and Leto's Delos and Hippodamia and Pelops, distinguished by his ivory shoulder, brave with horses?

Hylas had featured in the poetry of Theocritus and Apollonius (and probably Nicander), while Delos was the subject of poems by Callimachus and Parthenius. Pelops is a bit of an odd man out, since that myth is so strongly associated with Pindar, whose very words Virgil echoes here. Pindar is, of course, connected with Hellenistic poetry by means of the epinician links between this passage as a whole and the *Victoria Berenices* at the start of the third book of the *Aetia*.⁵⁴ But that explanation yokes together two topics taken directly from extremely famous Hellenistic poems with a third whose connection is much more indirect.⁵⁵ There is, however, another way of understanding the connection between these three topics: by seeing in these lines a double reference, not only to Hellenistic poetry itself but also to Rome's most recent standard-bearer for its aesthetic.

Following Servius, the commentaries tell us that *cui* in the phrase 'cui non dictus Hylas puer' must be understood as meaning *a quo*, and on one level that must be correct. But that sense runs contrary to the natural way of understanding the question: 'to whom has [the story of] the lad Hylas not been told?' Perhaps Virgil is alluding not only to the sheer number of poets who had treated this theme (*a quo*), but also to the success of a recent bestseller which everyone has had their slaves read out to them (in the usual sense of *cui*). In this light, the mention of Hylas must surely have reminded Virgil's readers immediately of Propertius' elegy 1.20, with its memorable and extensive narrative of the Hylas myth. The next hackneyed topic in Virgil's list is *Latonia Delos*. These words hint at the name which is the first word and the subject-matter of the first book of Propertius, *Cynthia*. *Cynthia* was, of course, an epithet of Delos itself, and the island is so small that it is straightforward to take Mount Cynthus as standing by synecdoche for it. Pliny (*NH* 4.66) even records that 'Cynthia' was the name given to Delos by the mythographer Aglaosthenes. Mynors pointed out that *Latoni*us is normally an epithet of Apollo or Artemis, not of Delos, so the usage here is 'unusual'.⁵⁶ The word *Cynthius* had followed the opposite trajectory, as Clausen showed, beginning as a geographical epithet of Delos, before becoming for Callimachus and Virgil an epithet of Apollo or Artemis, and ending as a proper name for Propertius.⁵⁷ Thus the pleonasm *Latonia Delos* suggests *Cynthia* as a synonym for both the adjective and the noun. The third item in Virgil's list is the story of Pelops and Hippodamia. Since Virgil is claiming that these are themes which have been done to death, it is surely relevant that this happens to be Propertius' favourite story in Book 1; it is the only myth he employs as an exemplum in two different poems in that book. The first time is in the second elegy (1.2.19–20) and the second is in the eighth (1.8b.35–6). In the latter passage, the land of Elis is described (assuming that the emendation is correct) as 'apta ... equis'.⁵⁸ This quasi-Homeric epithet is echoed by Virgil when he calls Pelops 'acer equis', a phrase emphasized by the enjambment. Where Propertius had a Latin version of the

⁵⁴ R. F. Thomas, 'Callimachus, the *Victoria Berenices*, and Roman poetry', *Classical Quarterly* 33 (1983), 92–113, at 93–101.

⁵⁵ On the difficulties in seeing the myths cited at the start of the third book of the *Georgics* as uniformly Alexandrian, see S. Lundström, 'Der Eingang des Proömiums zum dritten Buche der Georgica', *Hermes* 104 (1976), 163–91, at 167–71.

⁵⁶ Mynors, op. cit. (n. 46), ad 3.6.

⁵⁷ W. Clausen, 'Cynthius', *American Journal of Philology* 97 (1976), 245–7.

⁵⁸ For the near-certain conjecture of *apta*, see O. Skutsch, 'Notes on Ennian tragedy', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 71 (1966), 125–42, at 140–1, n. 14; for approval, see D. R. Shackleton Bailey, 'Review of *Propertius, Elegies*, ed. and trans. by G. P. Goold', *Gnomon* 65 (1993), 454 and Heyworth, op. cit. (n. 46), 39.

Homeric ἰππόβοτος or ἰπποτρόφος, Virgil substitutes a similar-sounding Latin version of ἰππόδαμος or ἰπποκέλευθος.⁵⁹ Thus Virgil, under the cover of a discourse about Hellenistic poetry, pays homage to the éclat of Propertius' debut as the leading Roman exponent of Alexandrianism: with the publication of his first book, who has not been told about Hylas, Cynthia and Hippodamia?

Virgil is on one level enumerating and rejecting themes associated with Hellenistic poets: Callimachus, Theocritus, Apollonius. But on another, he is also enumerating and rejecting the themes of the contemporary Latin poet who best represents the traditional inheritance of Roman Alexandrianism via Gallus and the Neoterics, a tradition in which Virgil's own work has, up to now, been situated. So when Virgil rejects the vulgarity of contemporary Roman Alexandrianism as overly slavish and literal-minded, his specific target is Propertius, but he is also putting some distance between his own earlier work on the one hand and his current and future work on the other. To some extent, therefore, this passage is a palinode, a rejection of Virgil's own earlier mode of poetry in the *Eclogues*, which embodied a 'slender' Hellenistic aesthetic. In this context, Propertius functions in precisely the same way he did at other programmatic moments in the *Georgics*: as a symbol for the sort of poet who declines to follow Virgil in his turn away from love poetry toward epic. Thus the young Propertius served a useful polemical purpose for Virgil. He represented a continuation of the pure tradition of Gallan love elegy, with which Virgil expressed such a complex relationship in the *Eclogues*, and so also represented an externalization of Virgil's own past preoccupations. As such, he provided a useful foil against which Virgil articulated his own changing self-definition as a poet.

CONCLUSION

The traditional dating of Propertius' first book cannot be supported. It is incredible that a poem supposedly written after Actium, which praises a lieutenant of Octavian who is intending to go to Asia to resolve the mess left by Antony, should fail to mention that struggle or celebrate its outcome. The cautiously anti-Antonian rhetoric of elegy 1.6 fits perfectly with the political atmosphere at Rome in early 33 B.C., and it is entirely likely that Volcacius' proconsulship of Asia was designated at the start of his consulship, as a provocation of Antony. We can therefore date the publication of the first book of Propertius to 33 B.C. When Virgil published the *Georgics*, Propertius' first book was the great event in recent literary history, which is shown by the way he reacted to it. In three programmatic passages where Virgil marks his new departure away from lighter themes toward toil, philosophy, and eventually the epic *Aeneid*, he alludes to Propertius as the one who has taken up the baton that he himself has chosen to drop. In the proem of the third book of the *Georgics*, Virgil seems to evince a knowledge of Propertius' first book as a whole, alluding to its overall theme and first word, Cynthia, to its long, final full-length elegy on Hylas, and to a myth Propertius uses in two different poems in that book.

Revising the date of the publication of Propertius' first book has other reverberations. It might imply that his is the earlier voice in those passages where he is in dialogue with the first book of Tibullus, though an earlier date of publication has recently been argued

⁵⁹ J. Hubaux, 'Parthenius, Gallus, Virgile, Properce', in *Miscellanea Properziana, Atti del accademia properziana del Subasio* (1957), 31–8, at 38, argued that Propertius is punning on Virgil's name in that same elegy 1.8 (assuming that 8a and 8b are part of the same composition), a poem which is full of allusions to the *Eclogues*, when he calls the tardy-rising Pleiades 'tardis Vergiliis' (1.8.11); for further amplification, see E. Pasoli, 'Gli Amores di Cornelio Gallo nell'ecloga 10 di Virgilio e nell'elegia 1.8 di Propertio: riconsiderazione del problema', *Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale* 19 (1977), 585–96, at 587 and P. Fedeli, 'Elegy and literary polemic in Propertius' *Monobiblos*', *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 3 (1981), 227–42, at 234. Does Virgil invert the pun by playing in the phrase *acer equis* on the 'haste' from which Propertius' own name might be derived?

for it also.⁶⁰ One might look again at the relationship with Horace's *Epodes*, which were published, like the *Georgics*, in the wake of Actium. For example, those who have interpreted *Epode* 11 as a response to love elegy have been compelled to assume that those elements which it had in common with Propertius were the result of both poets responding to the model of Cornelius Gallus.⁶¹ While there is sure to be some truth to that connection, we can now attribute some of those similarities to the direct influence of Propertius' first book.⁶² There can be no better gauge of the impact that Propertius had on his contemporaries than that both Virgil and Horace instantly recognized him as the heir to the tradition of Gallan elegy; both engaged with his work as the standard-bearer for that tradition while defining the evolving parameters of their own poetry.

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⁶⁰ P. E. Knox, 'Milestones in the career of Tibullus', *Classical Quarterly* 55 (2005), 204–16; on the relationship with Tibullus, see Lyne, op. cit. (n. 3).

⁶¹ See especially G. Luck, 'An interpretation of Horace's eleventh epode', *Illinois Classical Studies* 1 (1976), 122–6 and also F. Leo, 'De Horatio et Archilocho', in *Ausgewählte kleine Schriften II* (1960), 139–57, at 146–53 and A. Barchiesi, 'Alcune difficoltà nella carriera di un poeta giambico: giambo ed elegia nell'epodo 11', in R. C. Tovar and J. C. F. Corte (eds), *Bimilenario de Horacio* (1994), 127–38.

⁶² The idea of reading this *Epode* as a parody of Propertius' first book was adumbrated by R. O. A. M. Lyne, 'Servitium Amoris', *Classical Quarterly* 29 (1979), 117–130, at 122. I intend to discuss *Epode* 11 as a response to Propertius' first book in an article currently in preparation.